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The Air Force Process for Selecting Bases for Closure and Realignment

Selecting Air Force bases to close because of reductions in force structure is an extremely difficult task. There are no "obsolete" or "rundown" Air Force bases that are obvious candidates for closure. All of our bases suit their current purposes and are in good physical condition. Most have had substantial amounts of construction or renovation on them during the last decade as we strove to provide high quality facilities for our people to work and live in. Moreover, the level of community approval and cooperation we enjoy is very high at all of our bases. We cannot choose "bad bases" to close--there are none.

Following the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-510), and OSD guidance, the Air Force developed a structured process (Atch 1) that would treat all bases equally, without regard to past studies or announcements. The basis for selection was the DoD Force Structure Plan submitted to Congress in March, 1991, by the Secretary of Defense, and the eight DoD selection criteria approved by the Secretary on February 15, 1991.

The Secretary of the Air Force appointed a Base Closure Executive Group of five general officers and five comparable (SES-level) career civilians. Areas of expertise included environment; facilities and construction; finance; law; logistics; operations; personnel and training; and research, development and acquisition. Directors of Plans and Programs from the Major Commands (MAJCOMs) served as advisors to the group. Senior officers from the Air Reserve Component participated as appropriate. The group met frequently from December on; daily in February and March. A working group of senior experts was established to provide staff support.

The BCEG reviewed all bases, active and reserve components, with more than 300 civilians authorized to be employed. Data on all such bases in the United States was collected on a standard questionnaire directly from the bases, with validation by the MAJCOMs and Air Staff. Data and process validation continued throughout the study process with the assistance of an Air Force Audit Agency representative. Members of the BCEG frequently challenged data based on their own substantial knowledge and experience, and new data was provided where appropriate. In a few instances, data determined by the group to be inaccurate was challenged and corrected.

The BCEG placed all the bases in categories (see Atch 2) and conducted a capacity analysis based on the DoD Force Structure Plan. Categories/subcategories having no excess capacity were recommended for exclusion from further study and approved by the Secretary of the Air Force. These categories/subcategories were flying/mobility, flying/other, and the support category including depots, and product divisions/laboratories and test facilities (see Atch 3). All bases in the remaining categories/subcategories were evaluated on the basis of military requirements (the first three DoD selection criteria). As a result, certain bases having unique missions not affected by the DoD Force Structure Plan, in geographic locations where a base was required, or otherwise militarily needed were proposed for exemption from further study and approved by the Secretary of the Air Force (see Atch 4). Both groups remained subject to study as receivers.

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All Active Component bases not exempted in the remaining categories were individually examined on the basis of the eight selection criteria established by the Secretary of Defense, and approximately 80 subelements. The subelements were developed by the Air Force to provide specific data points for each criterion. They are specific to Air Force basing requirements and vary somewhat by category. For example, suitability for tanker operations is important for strategic flying bases but not for flying training; while nearby ranges are vital to tactical flying bases, of some value for strategic bases but not relevant to technical training bases. Each subelement for each base was individually color-coded by each member of the BCEG, based on the data presented. An overall coding for each criterion for each base was agreed upon by the group (consensus or vote). Because of the large number of bases in the strategic and tactical flying subcategories, each base was placed in one of three groups by each member, based on all eight DoD selection criteria, and a consensus vote was employed to reach an agreed grouping for each base.

For the tactical subcategory, five options were developed (six for strategic subcategory). Each option assigned the bases to three groups, in order of desirability for retention (Group One being the most desirable). The basic scoring employed all eight criteria, with priority to the first four (Option 1). Other options were developed by applying all eight criteria, but rescoring all bases in the category with added weight placed on specified factors. For example, one option gave added weight to factors relating to future encroachment on land and flying activities; another weighted cost to close; and another weighted military value, future encroachment, and cost equally. For strategic bases, the sixth option was scored based on wartime value, since strategic aircraft fight from their peacetime bases.

The Air Reserve Component Category required a slightly different approach. Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Component bases do not readily compete against each other. Air Reserve Component units enjoy a special relationship with their respective states and local communities. Further, consideration must be given to the recruiting needs of these units. The BCEG first identified those realignments which would achieve reasonable savings. Then, the eight DoD selection criteria were considered to assure that the realignment would be cost effective, consistent with military requirements, and otherwise sound.

Intercommand and interservice utilization analysis was accomplished. The Directors of Plans and Programs from the Major Commands met on several occasions with the BCEG. Also, at the senior military and civilian level, consultations with Army and Navy base closure representatives occurred regarding potential interservice base realignments and facility use.

Recommendations were presented to the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff in person by the entire group. The Secretary of the Air Force, with the advice of the Chief of Staff, and in consultation with the BCEG, selected the bases for inclusion on the base closure and realignment list. No bases were recommended for closure from the Other category. (Supporting analysis at Atch 5)

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Statement of Purpose

Background

For the past several years, the Air Force has operated with a continually declining budget. The budget decline has steepened in the recent past and is projected to continue in the Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP). The disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the perceived reduction in the Soviet threat over the past two years allowed the Air Force to accommodate a declining budget by reducing its force structure. The combination of reduced budgets and force structure reductions necessitates a major reduction in the Air Force base structure.

Applicable Specific Legislation

In January 1990, the Secretary of Defense announced DoD's intent to study several bases for closure and requested special legislation to streamline the closure process. Congress responded by terminating the Secretary of Defense's study process and by enacting the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (BC&RA/90 or Public Law 101-510).

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to forward the recommendations of the Secretary of the Air Force and supporting rationale in compliance with the BC&RA/90 and DoD policy.

Air Force Basing Concept

The Air Force base structure is intended to optimally support its force structure, support the training of the personnel required to man that force structure, support the maintenance of that force structure, and support the research and development necessary to modernize that force structure. A combination of threat and commitment to allies drives a balance of domestic and overseas bases.

The array of domestic bases is determined by a variety of factors such as survivability, dispersion, proximity to and unencroached access to training airspace and ranges, suitable weather, and adequate base infrastructure. Additionally, the Air Force must look to the future. As the Air Force is compelled to close bases, it must insure that the potential for limitations such as encroachment and airspace congestion are minimized at our remaining bases. Likewise, locations or regions where there is greater potential for future airspace/range expansion must be optimized.

In determining base structure, the Air Force focused on future concepts: increasing close air support interoperability with the Army and the development of a modernized Global Reach/Global Power concentration of fire power - the composite wing. With regard to increasing close air support interoperability, the Air Force will base, to the maximum extent, its remaining active A-10/OA-10 force structure on bases near major Army installations. This will provide daily interoperability with Army units at the division level and below, and enhance the development of improved interoperability and fire power

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support. At Ft Bragg, it is envisioned that when, for example, the 82nd Airborne Division deploys, the A-10 squadron to be based at Pope AFB will deploy with it. Because these units will have trained together on a daily basis, they will employ as a better integrated fighting team and the "come as you are" force projection utility of the 82nd Airborne Division will be significantly enhanced. Finally, because these A-10/OA-10 squadrons will be based at the bases which support other missions as well, the Air Force can attain budget efficiencies.

Within the context of Global Reach/Global Power, the Air Force will establish a composite wing at Mt Home AFB, Idaho. As this concept evolves, this wing will be equipped with a balance of fighter, tanker and, potentially bomber aircraft. This core fighting team will be able to reach out and employ a lethal concentrated blend of fire power anywhere in the world. Because this unit will train together daily, deployment/employment interoperability will be maximized and doctrine will be developed which will enhance total air power employment. Additionally, supporting force structure from nearby units, from both the active and reserve components, is available to train with this composite force on a frequent basis on some of the most capable ranges in the United States.

The bases which will remain in the Air Force basing structure will effectively and efficiently support the programmed force structure. This base structure will retain the flexibility to accommodate absorption of overseas force structure if needed as well as accommodate changes in the strategic threat. Obviously, future changes in force structure as well as changes in factors which enhance training, such as airspace, ranges, encroachment and congestion, will cause the Air Force to continuously seek ways to operate more effectively and efficiently.

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